

RAC NOTES

*Arizona Bureau of Land Management
Resource Advisory Council Newsletter
August 2005, Number 15*

Highlights of RAC Meeting in Phoenix, AZ, and Training Session at the Sonoran Desert National Monument, January 25-26, 2005

On January 25th, a RAC business meeting was convened at the BLM National Training Center in Phoenix. **Frances Werner, RAC Chair, called the meeting to order** and led off the introductions of personnel in attendance. **Elaine Zielinski, BLM Arizona State Director, welcomed the group and gave a summary of legislation, regulations, and statewide issues.** Her report included the following topics:

- **Organizational Effectiveness Update,**
- **Personnel Update,**
- **Secretarial Order on Land Exchange Process,**
- **Wilderness Characteristics Land Use Planning Policy,**
- **Burns Amendment – Wild Horse and Burro Sale Authority, and**
- **Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act.**

The RAC learned that Beau McClure retired after 40+ years with BLM. He made significant contributions to BLM's efforts involving international and border issues, including leadership of the Borderland Management Task Force. The RAC wishes him the best in his retirement years.

RAC members briefly discussed the new recreation act and its impacts. The legislation requires a RAC like committee and changes how agencies can charge fees. (See a summary of the new legislation on pages 8 to 10.)

Next, **Dr. Linda Kennedy, Audubon Research Scientist,** gave a presentation on **monitoring procedures used at the Audubon Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch.** The ranch is located in the southern portion of the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area (LCNCA). Grazing ceased on these lands in 1968. Thus, the Research Ranch provides a reference area against which various environmental experiments may be evaluated. Dr. Kennedy discussed the Research Ranch's mission, goals, research projects, monitoring program, and her thoughts on successful monitoring practices. Her presentation was very timely and interesting, particularly as rangeland monitoring continues to be a key area of interest to the RAC.

Next, **Mike Taylor, Deputy State Director for Resources,** presented a **BLM Program Orientation,** mainly to educate the new RAC members about BLM. His presentation covered the amount of BLM lands managed in Arizona, BLM's mission, and its wide range of responsibilities. Included was a short overview of responsibilities related to management of recreation; commercial permit activities; authorization of transportation and communication systems; management of

wildlife and T&E species; wild horse and burro program; invasive species; protection of natural, scenic and scientific values; preservation of cultural sites; and wildfire suppression and protection of lives, resources, and property.

Next, **Carol Kershaw, Lands and Realty Coordinator**, gave a very informative presentation on **BLM's Rights-of-Way Program**. She discussed the various laws, regulations, and guidelines that govern this area. A new executive order directs agencies to expedite rights-of-way processing. Her presentation explained the use of corridors to plan for and consolidate utility rights-of-way uses, and covered BLM's authority under the Mineral Leasing Act to authorize oil and gas pipelines on Federal lands. New cost recovery regulations are expected to be published in early 2005, which will include a new method for determining cost recovery fees.

Next, **RAC member Lee Aitken** gave a presentation on **Rights-of-Way from a User Perspective**. Using a large map, he discussed a current proposal by Tucson Electric Power to build a transmission line to Mexico. He discussed the various route alternatives, the extensive agency coordination required, and the differing views of the Forest Service and Arizona Corporation Commission on the preferred route. The environmental impact statement is expected to be out in February, 2005. There is a lot of public interest in the project. Considering the slow pace of the NEPA process and extensive state and Federal agency coordination, this is expected to be a 10 year project. His presentation provided the RAC a better understanding of the complexity of rights-of-way issues, the frustration felt by utility providers, and the private sector's concerns

about the need to streamline rights-of-way approval processes.

The **Public Comment period** was opened by the Chair but no comments were received.

Next, **Mike Taylor, Deputy State Director for Resources**, gave a progress report on **land use plans in process**. He responded to RAC member questions on specific plans and provided a handout which gave a comprehensive status update for all of the plans. The RAC desires to stay abreast of land use planning issues and will continue to receive updates at future RAC meetings.

Next, the RAC reviewed **Rangeland Resource Team (RRT) nominations** from the Tucson Field Office. Shela McFarlin, Tucson Field Manager, provided a handout and requested reappointment of three current members to the RRT. After review and discussion, the RAC approved the nominations as proposed.

RAC Working Group Reports.

a. **Wild Horse and Burro (WH&B)**. The Work Group discussed the need to counter-act negative public perceptions of the WH&B program. The RAC reviewed and discussed a proposed letter to Director Elaine Zielinski that laid out the RAC's concerns and perspective, i.e., concerns that excessive numbers of wild horses and burros are causing resource damage to public lands; BLM has done a great job with round-ups and adoptions, but un-adoptable animals are a big burden to taxpayers; the Burns amendment provides a much needed tool to assist BLM protect our public lands in a more cost-effective manner. It was agreed that this topic would be added to the next RAC meeting agenda. The RAC also approved a

motion to prepare a letter for signature and release by the Chair to Director Zielinski.

b. **OHV.** The Work Group Chair announced that the Middle Gila Conservation Partnership (MGCP) route evaluation process was about two thirds completed. Three route alternatives will be presented to the land managers. Also, it was announced that an OHV managers' course will be presented at BLM's Johnson Valley OHV area in California. This site is a great OHV destination for the public and BLM managers are encouraged to visit the area. The Work Group Chair feels that more emphasis is needed on designating appropriate OHV use areas as part of the current land use planning efforts. It was suggested that a presentation on the Johnson Valley OHV area be added to the next RAC meeting agenda.

c. **Standards and Guidelines (S&G).** The S&G Work Group Chair discussed the following items:

- Ongoing monitoring on Las Cienegas NCA by the Nature Conservancy. The work group has some reservations about the methodology being used and will be kept informed.

- The new grazing regulations have not yet been published.

- Update on permit reviews: completed FY 2004, number held over, and projected for completion FY 2005.

- Recently signed agreement between land-managing agencies and Cattle-Growers Association concerning utilization monitoring guidelines and how utilization data should be used for decision-making.

d. **Public Relations.** The draft January 2005 RAC Notes newsletter was distributed to the RAC members for review. The Chair requested that any changes be submitted by

February 2nd. The finalized newsletter will be posted to the BLM web site.

e. **Land Use Planning and Tenure.** The Chair announced that the Agua Fria National Monument/Bradshaw-Harquahala land use plan will be briefed to the Resources staff on February 4th. Also, the RAC will be given an opportunity to review draft land use plans before they go out to the public for comment.

f. **Recreation and Tourism.** The Chair discussed the Work Group meeting held with Karen Scates, Deputy Director of the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT). It was a very beneficial brain-storming session and helped shed light on ways that BLM and AOT could mutually support each other's mission. Information sharing can make BLM more visible. It would be good to link BLM's web site to the AOT web site. The Public Lands Information Centers are good venues to provide maps and information on BLM sites. Rural communities could benefit from BLM recreation opportunities. Cultural and heritage tourism is a growing trend. BLM lands offer good opportunities to educate visitors on cultural and heritage sites. BLM field offices have had some successes and these examples should be exported to other field offices for consideration. The Work Group will continue to develop a plan for the next RAC meeting. A RAC member voiced concern that BLM's internal priorities have traditionally focused on resource protection. The need to manage recreational values and opportunities is the wave of the future

Next, the RAC reviewed and discussed the **draft 2005 RAC Annual Work Plan**. After identifying some minor changes, the RAC approved a motion to adopt the Annual Work Plan as modified.

On January 26th, the RAC met at the National Training Center to receive **training on the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Grazing Administration**. The S&G Chair and BLM staff gave a presentation on the history of the Arizona standards and guidelines, key components, implementation and resource evaluation, and roles and responsibilities of the BLM, RAC, and RRT. Each RAC member received a training workbook with more detailed information. Next, the RAC and BLM staff traveled to a field site at the Sonoran Desert National Monument (near Margie's Cove). Despite intermittent rain, the group visited a key area and discussed key species and techniques used to assess rangeland health. The group received orientation on use of a grid along a transect line to gather data for utilization monitoring. The relatively heavy growth of seasonal forage and grasses was due to abundant winter rains. The group enjoyed this scenic site in the North Maricopa Mountains, particularly the lush, green desert landscape and mild temperatures.

Highlights of RAC Meeting and Tour in Kingman, AZ, May 3-4, 2005

On May 3rd, a RAC business meeting was convened at the Dambar and Steakhouse banquet room in Kingman, AZ. **Frances Werner, RAC Chair, called the meeting to order** and led off the introductions of personnel in attendance. **Carl Roundtree, BLM Associate State Director**, welcomed the group and gave a **summary of legislation, regulations, and statewide issues**. His report included the following topics:

- **Sonoran Desert National Monument Advisory Council,**

- **Dos Pobres Update,**
- **Wal-Mart's Acres for American Program,**
- **Archaeology Program/Sear Point Cultural Resources Survey,**
- **Topock Update,**
- **Fire Outlook and Air Tanker Update,**
- **Saginaw Hill Investigation and Closure, and**
- **Personnel Update.**

The RAC learned about the upcoming retirement of Roger Taylor, Arizona Strip Field Manager. Roger's contributions to BLM's efforts on the Arizona Strip have been enormous. The RAC has enjoyed working with Roger and wishes him the best in his retirement years.

Next, **Don Applegate, Arizona State Recreation Planner**, gave an informative presentation on the **Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act**. He passed out a handout which explained how the Act changes the way agencies can charge fees and what it means to BLM. The BLM Arizona staff has looked at all BLM recreation fees across the state and identified two fee sites that are not in compliance with the new rules. These fees have been eliminated. A key provision of the Act is that BLM no longer has authority to charge an "entrance" fee, but has authority to charge a standard amenity fee under certain conditions. Expanded amenity fees can be charged for sites that meet certain criteria, e.g., developed campgrounds. As a general rule, revenues will remain at the site of collection. The Act also requires that the Forest Service and BLM establish Recreation Resource Advisory Committees (RRACs). These committees will make recreation fee program recommendations on implementing or eliminating certain recreation fees, establishing a specific recreation fee site, and expanding or limiting the program. A more detailed

summary of the Act is provided on pages 8 to 10.

The **Public Comment period** was opened by the Chair and comments were received from two members of the public. A member of the Hualapai Four Wheelers discussed their work with BLM on an inventory of OHV trails. He wants to ensure that BLM includes users in their assessment of OHV trails. The second commenter, the owner of the Santa Maria Ranch, provided an update on efforts to secure legal, motorized access to a wilderness in-holding. The issue has a long history and is currently under litigation. BLM was not at liberty to discuss the issue; however, the item may be put on a future RAC meeting agenda. Members of the RAC were interested in getting a better understanding of the issue.

Next, **Tim Smith, Lake Havasu Field Manager**, gave a very informative presentation on **BLM Designated Off-Highway Vehicle Areas**. Tim had previously worked in BLM California and was involved in managing OHV recreation. He provided a handout which gave pertinent details on California BLM's managed OHV areas and the types of OHV activities supported. Areas included both "open" and "limited" designations. He provided his perspective on what works and doesn't work in California. Areas that are smaller and with fewer resource conflicts seem to work better than large areas with multiple resource conflicts. Also, trail systems that are managed for quality experiences and those with strong, diverse community support have worked out well. Tim also summarized the Lake Havasu Field Office OHV areas and his thoughts on what would work well in that field office. Though the Johnson Valley OHV area has worked well in California, particularly for large groups

and racing events, Tim did not think such a large OHV area could easily be duplicated in today's environment due to sensitive wildlife habitat and T&E issues (T&E species and NEPA issues were dealt with years ago for the Johnson Valley OHV area). Managed trail opportunities, e.g., the Paiute Trail, seem to be the new trend. Tim's presentation was well-received and the RAC gained a better appreciation of how OHV areas could work in Arizona.

Next, **Len Marceau, Kingman Field Office Outdoor Recreation Planner**, gave the RAC an **update on recreation projects underway in the Kingman Field Office**. Inventory of OHV routes is continuing. Development of non-motorized trails in the Cerbat Foothills Recreation Area is also ongoing. Users have helped by providing a non-federal match for RTP grant funding. The Mohave County Probation Department has provided volunteer labor. An access guide will be published.

Next, **Mike Taylor, Deputy State Director for Resources**, gave a progress report on **land use plans in process**. A handout was distributed which gave a comprehensive status update for all of the plans. The Chair of the Land Use Planning and Tenure work group summarized the Work Group's discussions on the protocol for RAC involvement in land use planning. He noted that three draft plans should be ready for RAC review soon. A general consensus was reached that the BLM staff will brief the RAC prior to the State Director's briefing and will address any RAC concerns before finalizing the land use plan briefing to the State Director. However, an open issue is the need to review and update the current RAC protocol (dated October, 2002) to more accurately depict the timing and extent of the RAC's involvement at key milestones in the land use planning process.

During discussion of the **Field Manager Reports**, members of the RAC expressed great concern over closure of access to the east side of Aravaipa Canyon by a private landowner along the Aravaipa-Klondyke Road. The landowner is charging a \$25 per vehicle fee to open the locked gate. The Safford Field Office has been forced to cancel hundreds of Aravaipa Canyon Wilderness east-end permits and will not issue future permits for the east entrance until the issue is resolved. Though the road has been maintained for many years by Graham County, it was never officially designated as a County Road. The BLM has sent a letter to Graham County asking for prompt resolution of the problem. Options are under consideration by the county board of supervisors.

RAC Working Group Reports.

a. **Standards and Guidelines (S&G).** The Chair of the S&G Work Group discussed the following topics:

- The new grazing regulations have not yet been published.

- Status of permit reviews.

- The final Nature Conservancy Literature Review report is out and has been accepted by the Phoenix Field Office.

- The Nature Conservancy report on monitoring on Las Cienegas NCA is out. The S&G Work Group will review and comment. Comments should be sent to the Chair.

- BLM National Monitoring Strategy. A handout was passed out which addressed the goals and objectives of this initiative. The strategy is a multi-year, integrated strategic approach to improving efficiency and effectiveness of BLM's monitoring efforts.

- Recommendation for a state-wide meeting of BLM staff, RRT, and RAC

members on Standards and Guidelines, i.e., roles and responsibilities, what working, what needs improvement, etc.

b. **Public Relations.** The Chair will prepare the next RAC Notes newsletter in August 2005 to reflect results of the January and May 2005 RAC meetings.

c. **Recreation and Tourism.** The Chair provided a summary of the Work Group's discussions concerning updating the BLM Arizona recreation and tourism document and aligning it with the national BLM priorities for recreation and visitor services. One member discussed how BLM lands provide a "natural resource enjoyment area" and have significant social value. BLM needs to re-focus on recreation. Mike Taylor, Deputy State Director for Resources, advised that recreation is one of three national BLM priorities: energy, grazing, and recreation. BLM Arizona is in good position to benefit from the recreation focus. The group will work on an outline for the new recreation and tourism document, to include the role recreation plays in BLM Arizona and a guide to recreation and tourism opportunities on BLM Arizona lands. This would benefit gateway communities that are located near BLM recreation and tourism destinations.

d. **Wild Horse and Burro (WH&B).** The Work Group discussed the following topics:

- Arizona WH&B Program Summary. Adoption program is doing well. Field offices are estimating that all Herd Management Areas (HMAs) are at the Appropriate Management Level (AML). This fiscal year BLM will census all six HMAs to verify populations and confirm whether Arizona is indeed at AML.

- Op-Ed on WH&B issues. A draft was passed out and discussed. It clearly lays out the challenges faced by BLM in maintaining rangeland health and appropriate herd sizes.

- The group also discussed a proposed letter to Director Elaine Zielinski. The RAC believes that the Burns Amendment gives BLM an important tool to reduce excessive numbers of animals that are causing resource damage to public lands, and the RAC is concerned that this new authority may be jeopardized by the controversy caused by a recent sale of wild horses in another State.

e. **Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV).** The Chair discussed the following topics:

- OHV Park tours. The tour of Johnson Valley OHV area was very beneficial and timely. The ongoing land use planning efforts provide an important opportunity to designate appropriate OHV areas and steer users away from inappropriate areas.

- Permit fees. The Chair identified concerns regarding fees charged for organized, casual uses versus commercial, competitive uses. There are inconsistencies in the cost recovery rules. This needs to be reviewed as it discourages permit applications by organized OHV groups for casual use.

- BLM Arizona OHV guidelines. The Chair has gathered copies of guidelines from other western states and has prepared a draft document for Arizona. It will be sent to the Work Group members for comment.

- Middle Gila Conservation Partnership (MGCP). The MGCP has prepared a draft Motorized Route Evaluation Report. It discusses the Partnership's goals and objectives and its efforts to identify appropriate motorized route alternatives for consideration by the land managing agencies. It represents an excellent and well coordinated effort that involved a diverse

range of interests. The report also voices the need to protect this area for open space, public recreation, military training, ranching, mining, and conservation purposes. Lands should not be transferred to private ownership for expansion of residential development into the area. The report will be finalized and presented to the agencies in the near future.

On May 4th, the RAC met at the Kingman Field Office to receive an **overview of fuels management, community assistance, and fire prevention in the Kingman Field Office.**

Following the briefing, the RAC and BLM staff departed on a **field tour of hazard fuel reduction projects in and around the communities of Pinion Pine and Pine Lake in the north end of the Hualapai Mountains.**

In Pinion Pine, the RAC viewed a fuel break that has been constructed around the community. At another stop, the RAC visited a vegetation disposal site created to assist Pine Lake residents in their fuel reduction efforts. The group also viewed a portion of the Pine Lake Fuel Break at this site. The group also stopped along a ridge road on the south side of Pine Lake to see a fuel break, heli-spot construction, and ongoing implementation of the Pine Lake South fuel reduction project. The Pine Lake Working Group, consisting of the Hualapai Mountain Homeowner Association, Pine Lake Fire Department, Hualapai Mountain County Park, and the BLM, was formed to seek solutions to wildland urban interface issues in the Pine Lake area. The BLM's efforts in helping establish this forum for community collaboration and cooperation is commendable. Good progress is being made to improve forest health and reduce the risks of wildland fire impacts to the community.

Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA) Summary

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act was passed in the 2005 Omnibus Appropriations bill signed into law by President Bush on December 8, 2004.

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act benefits visitors to Federal public lands by:

- Reinvesting a majority of fees back to the site of collection to enhance visitor services and reduce the backlog of maintenance needs for recreation facilities (including trail maintenance, toilet facilities, boat ramps, hunting blinds, interpretive signs and programs);
- Providing an interagency fee program that reduces confusion over differing fee programs and passes by reducing four national passes down to one.
- Providing more opportunities for public involvement in determining recreation fee sites and fees;
- Providing focused criteria and limits on areas and sites where recreation fees can be charged; and
- Providing more opportunities for cooperation with gateway communities through fee management agreements for visitor and recreation services, emergency medical services and law enforcement services.

Many recreation activities and sites will continue to be free. The Act includes additional provisions that build on experiences from the Fee Demo program and improve the fee program by clarifying the circumstances in which fees may be charged. The Act prohibits charging fees for:

- General access to National Forests and Grasslands and Bureau of Land Management areas;
- Horseback riding, walking through, driving through, or boating through areas where no facilities or services are used;
- Access to overlooks or scenic pullouts;
- Undesignated parking areas where no facilities are provided for
- Picnicking along roads or trails; and
- In addition individuals under 16 will not be charged an entrance or standard amenity fee.

REA applies to Federal recreation lands under the jurisdiction of the following land management agencies:

- National Park Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- U.S. Forest Service

All agencies except the Bureau of Reclamation have had fee authority under Fee Demonstration program and the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. The Act authorizes the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture for the next 10 years to establish, modify, charge and collect recreation fees at Federal recreation lands and waters as provided for in the Act

Possible Fees as identified in the Act

The Act enables Forests and Grasslands to have three types of fees called Standard, Expanded and Special Recreation Permits.

- **Standard fees** are typical day use fees. Sites or areas must have specific features and amenities in order to qualify as a fee site.
- **Expanded fees** are fees that provide direct benefits to individuals or groups. They include things like developed campgrounds, cabin rentals, highly developed boat docks and swimming areas. They may also include services like hookups, dump stations, special tours and reservations services.
- **Special Recreation Permits** are for areas where natural and cultural resources need protection or where extra measures are required for the health and safety of visitors. Permits may be required for places like wilderness areas, shooting ranges and specialized trail systems.

The America the Beautiful Pass

The Act expands the National Park Pass by authorizing a new “America the Beautiful – National Parks and Federal Recreation Lands Pass”.

- This pass will cover entrance fees and standard amenity recreation fees for all Federal recreation lands and waters where a fee is charged.
- Existing National Park passes, Golden Eagle, Golden Age, and Golden Access passes will be grandfathered in under their existing benefits and will remain valid until expired. These passes will continue to be sold until the new pass is available.
- Site specific and regional passes such as the Adventure Pass for National Forests in Southern California will remain valid and will continue to be available under this Act.

REA provides for a high level of public involvement in determining new fee areas and fee schedules by:

- Implementing the use of Recreation Resource Advisory Committees (RACs) for National Forest and BLM sites and areas to give communities additional opportunities to provide input on the implementation of a fee or the establishment of a specific recreation fee site;

- Providing additional opportunities for public participation and prior notice prior to a new fee being established; and
- Communicating with the visiting public on how fee revenues are being spent to improve visitor facilities and services.

Implementation of the Act

- Each fee project that was previously authorized under the Fee Demonstration Program begun in 1996 will be evaluated to ensure that it meets the criteria defined in the Act.
- Where fee programs are determined to not meet the provisions of the Act, changes will be made.
- The Fee Leadership Council, an interagency group created in 2002 to facilitate coordination and consistency among high level officials of the Department of the Interior and U.S. Department of Agriculture, will oversee implementation.
- Additionally, the Departments will keep the public informed as changes are made to fees and passes during implementation through:
 - Press releases
 - Public notices and;
 - Postings on websites at <http://www.doi.gov/>. and www.fs.fed.us/passespermits/.

RAC Membership

Following is the list of *newly-appointed, **reappointed and current RAC members, the category they represent, and their place of residence. Each member's terms are for 3-years, and are staggered.

Commodity Category (5 members)

Ty Kelly, Grazing, Wickenburg, AZ - Term Ending 9/06

**Lee Aitken, Transportation/
ROW, Tucson, AZ - Term Ending 9/07

Sandra McCullen, Off-Road Vehicle
Use, Mesa, AZ - Term Ending 9/06

*Carolyn Loder, Energy/Minerals,
Tempe, AZ - Term Ending 9/07

Stephen Saway, Off-Road Vehicle Use,
Sierra Vista, AZ - Term Ending 9/05

Non-Commodity Category (5 members)

Glendon Collins, Dispersed Recreation,
Phoenix, AZ - Term Ending 9/05

**William Branan, Environmental,
Elgin, AZ - Term Ending 9/07

*Jan Kelly Holder, Dispersed Recreation,
Safford, AZ - Term Ending 9/07

Tina Clark, Historical/Archaeology,
Yuma, AZ - Term Ending 9/06

Frances Werner, Dispersed Recreation,
Tucson, AZ - Term Ending 9/05

Local Area Interests (5 members)

Lawrence Nelson, Elected Official,
Yuma, AZ - Term Ending 9/05

Lorraine Eiler, Native American Tribes,
Glendale, AZ - Term Ending 9/06

Lamar Smith, Academia, Benson, AZ -
Term Ending 9/05

*Jay Adkins, Public-At-Large, Goodyear,
AZ - Term Ending 9/07

Peggy Titus, Public-At-Large, Mayer,
AZ - Term Ending 9/06

Robert Broscheid is the Governor's representative to the RAC. Frances Werner is chair for the Arizona RAC.

For Further Information

If you have any questions about the RAC, contact Deborah Stevens, BLM Public Affairs Specialist, at the BLM Arizona State Office, 222 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85004-2203, or call 602-417-9215. For the latest approved RAC Meeting Minutes, check BLM's External Home Page @ www.az.blm.gov

About RAC Notes

RAC Notes is published periodically by the RAC Public Relations Working Group to provide the public with information related to current RAC activities and public land issues. To get on the mailing list, please contact Deborah Stevens at (602) 417-9215 or e-mail to Deborah_Stevens@blm.gov.

The RAC Notes is also posted on the BLM Home Page @ www.az.blm.gov under the News/Resource Advisory Council button.

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